DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 942 CG 012 531

AUTHOR Collier, Helen
TITLE Training Parents to Help Other Parents in the Management of Their Children.
INSTITUTION Kansas Univ., Lawrence. Bureau of Child Research.; Shawnee Mission Public Schools, Kans.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Mental Health (DHEW), Rockville, Md.
PUB DATE Dec 77
GRANT 1-T31-MH 14543
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy (11th, Atlanta, Georgia, December 9-11, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Change; *Change Strategies; *Child Rearing; *Educational Programs; Family Relationship; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Education; Parent Participation; Program Descriptions; Socialization

ABSTRACT

Responsive parenting, a preventative mental health training program, teaches parents to observe and measure behaviors of concern and to apply social learning theory principles to increase appropriate social and academic behaviors in the home. The program also includes training parents to teach other parents the Responsive Parenting Model. Criteria for selection into the training program include completion of the Responsive Parenting Course and completion of an independent reliability check during each phase of the project and scientific verification. The training program consists of four levels: (1) the Apprentice Group Leader; (2) the Group Leader; (3) the Apprentice Program Director; and (4) the Program Director. (Author)

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# TRAINING PARENTS TO HELP OTHER PARENTS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN [1]

Helen Collier

An integral part of Responsive Parenting is the Parent Training Program which is designed to mobilize manpower available in our environment rather than to rely on additional professional manpower. The manpower referred to is parents, parents who have learned how to use bahavioral concepts and procedures. The Parent Training aspect of the Responsive Parenting Program gives these parents further training and practical experience and then they are able to teach other parents in the setting of the Responsive Parenting Model.

The training program is available to all interested parents who have completed the Responsive Parenting Course.

The training program consists of four levels:

-The Apprentice Group Leader - assists the Group Leader and gains more experience in using management skills

-The Group Leader - interprets the concepts and procedures to parents in a small group setting.

-The Apprentice Program Director - assists the Program Director and demonstrates their ability to present the basic concepts in a lecture format.

-Program Director - Administers and coordinates the entire Responsive Parenting Program.

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Training as an Apprentice Group Leader is provided for parents selected by the Responsive Parenting Staff. Criteria for selection includes completion of the Responsive Parenting Course and completion of an independent reliability check during each phase of the project, and scientific verification. Parents must have demonstrated the use of good social skills including appropriate interaction with other parents and the staff and demonstrated enthusiasm for the program and its basic principles and procedures. The parents let us know in a variety of ways that they are enthusiastic and interested in working with the program. For example, at one site the Program Director shared jars of home made pickles with her staff as a thank you for attending Group Leader Meetings on time and for being so helpful. One of the fathers asked, "How do I get a jar of pickles?", and when told they were for staff members, John said "When can I start?" Another parent said "yes, I'd

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[1] A paper presented at the Association for Advancement of Behavior Therapy Atlanta Georgia, December, 1977

like to be an apprentice but I must tell you it is mostly for selfish reasons. For several days after class I'm very consistent, then I loose some of that consistency and by the next class time I really need the support and the reminders that attending class gives me. Another ten weeks should give me more practice." Sally has stayed with the program and is now an exceptional Group Leader.

As an apprentice, the parent must have three hours per week to devote to the parenting program and attend all meetings. The Apprentice is assigned to a Group Leader, helps with the first session "teaser" program and enrollment, and the activities of the small group, assuming more responsibility for the group as the course progresses. Apprentice Group Leaders must increase their knowledge of the behavioral analysis concepts by completing another home project using a different research design than they used during their initial Home Behavior Change Project. Apprentices are also required to read the text book Managing Behavior by R. Vance Hall, and use their new skills with parents and co-workers. A Group Leader and Program Director may recommend that an apprentice Group Leader who has done a good job and feels capable, become a Group Leader.

The Group Leader organizes and conducts the small group sessions, helping parents understand concepts, apply techniques and carry out a Home Behavior Change Project. Group Leaders are also responsible for checking attendance, contacting parents by phone who have missed a class or who are having difficulty, and training their apprentice. Group Leaders must be supportive and responsive to their Program Director by attending weekly group leader meetings, and being on time. The Group Leader appears to be the most important contact between the parents and the program. As a part of a final evaluation survey, parents are asked to rate the Lecture (large group), Small Group Discussions, Quizzes, Parents Manual, Individual Home Project and Group Leaders.

The gradations range from Very Important, to Important, Not Very Important and Unimportant. In a random sampling of 47 final evaluation surveys, 41 rated their Group Leaders as Very Important and 39 rated Small Group Discussions as Very Important.

Training as an Apprentice Program Director is provided for Group Leaders who have served for a minimum of three course offerings and have shown exceptional skills in working with parents. Apprentice Program Directors should have at least five hours a week to devote to

the program. This includes attendance at all meetings. As an Apprentice, the trainee will observe and assist the Program Director whenever appropriate, conduct at least three large group sessions, monitor small group activities for accuracy of information, assist Group Leaders, monitor performance of Group Leaders and Apprentice Group Leaders and provide feedback. The Apprentice Program Director will also complete a third Home Behavior Change Project which includes a target behavior, measurement procedure, and a behavior change procedure different from his or her previous projects. An Apprentice Program Director who spends a course offering as a successful Apprentice may become a Program Director the next session.

The Program Director has completed four levels of training and is ready to assume several areas of responsibility. These include administration and maintenance of a class site, organizing and conducting large group sessions, training of Apprentice Program Directors, Group Leaders and Apprentice Group Leaders, and organizing and conducting weekly Group Leader meetings.

Administration and maintenance of a class site includes establishing a meeting place, and arranging the learning environment for the class. It has been our experience that the larger group meetings are most successful when held in a comfortable setting such as a school library. Administration also includes staff assignments, group assignments, recording attendance, planning the "teaser" program, enrollment and the 10th session activities. These activities include parents sharing their Home Behavior Change Projects, the Verification of Participation Certificates, which are included in the Responsive Parenting Manual, and a "graduation" party for the parents and staff. The most important of these activities is the sharing of projects by the parents. Until this session, parents have only been aware of the work being done in their own small group. Now they hear about all the Home Behavior Change Projects. They also hear other parents say things like:

-I'm enjoying my children more

-My wife and I found that our project was successful in direct proportion to the amount of time and effort we put into working with our children.

-It really works!

-I liked the fact that we were given tools rather than theory for solving proglems.

-We've found out what neat kids we have!

-You ought to call this Responsive Peopling.

This activity is also a major reinforcer for the Responsive Parenting Staff.

The second responsibility is for the large group sessions. The Program Director clarifies and elaborates on the concepts outlined in the manual by using examples and group activities.

Training of Apprentice Program Directors, Group Leaders and Apprentice Group Leaders is done by monitoring the activities of the small groups for accuracy of information and progress of all Home Behavior Change Projects, with continuous feedback to the Apprentice Program Director, Group Leaders and Apprentice Group Leaders.

Weekly Group Leader meetings require planning and organization. The agenda should cover the week's format, problems that arise in small groups, and promote communication between staff menbers.

The Program Director gives final approval to all people who will be on staff.

I would like to share our favorite Responsive Parenting story with you. Last Spring, a father who had just finished class, presented his Home Behavior Change Project. Tom had used planned ignoring to extinguish his five year old son's interrupting behavior, and was very pleased with the results. Tom's graph showed a typical increase in the behavior when he first instituted treatment and as he pointed out that fact, Tom said, "those had to be the two worst days of his life."

When Tom finished telling about his study, he went on to share some of his feelings about the program. Tom said, "You know, I was a fascist father, I didn't have any trouble getting my kids to mind me, they didn't dare do otherwise. I let my wife talk me into enrolling in the Responsive Parenting Program, but I said to myself, the first night, if they infringe on my parental rights in any way, that's the night I walk out. Being very skeptical and questioning every concept, I began to have some questions for myself about my relationship with my sons. Even though they did everything I told them to do, I wondered why they always asked for their mother when I picked them up at their school. I also realized that I didn't see them laugh or clown around. I'd hear giggling and laughing down the hall or around a corner but when they caught sight of me, both boys would wipe the smile off and practically stand at attention.

Now things are different. I've changed, about a 180° turn around. My kids still mind, but they are just as glad to see me as they are their mother. They laugh and tease where I can see them, and when I come home we do all those sticky things that boys and their dads do when they love each other. At no time were my parental rights threatened in any way. We have just moved into a new home and we would like to put our Group Leader over our mantel, she's an angel!"

This program was supported in part by a National Institute of Mental Health Grant (1 T31 HH14543) to the University of Kansas Bureau of Child REsearch and the Shawnee Mission School District.

RESPONSIVE PARENT TRAINING ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Levels of Training

(Key: GL = Group Leader, AGL = Apprentice Group Leader, APD = Apprentice Program Director, P.D. = Program Director)

PARENT

| |
|---|
| Completion of Course<br>Home Behavior Change Project<br>Recommended by Group Leader<br>Enthusiasm for Program<br>Good social skills |

APPRENTICE GROUP LEADER

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Home Behavior Change Project | Helps with Teaser<br>Helps with Enrollment<br>Helps with 10th Session activities<br>Assists Group Leader | Attend all meetings<br>Practice social reinforcement |

GROUP LEADER

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attendance<br>Organize and Conduct small group<br>Parents Home Behavior Change Project | Help with Teaser<br>Help with Enrollment<br>Help with 10th Session activities | Feedback to Program Director<br>Feedback to GL<br>Plan with AGL for participation in small group | Attend all meetings<br>Recommend parents to be AGLs. |

APPRENTICE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Home Behavior Change Project | Help with Teaser<br>Help with Enrollment<br>Help with 10th night activities | Conduct a minimum of 3 presentations in a large group<br>Monitor small groups | Attends all meetings<br>Gives feedback to GLs and AGLs. |

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Organize Parenting Program<br>Establish Meeting Place | Staff assignments<br>Group assignments<br>Plans for Teaser, Enrollment and 10th Session Activities | Organize and conduct presentations in large group<br>Monitor Small Groups attendance<br>Progress of Home Behavior Change Projects | Prepare agenda and conduct weekly meetings<br>Feedback to AGLs, GLs and APDs<br>Recommends parents for AGLs.<br>Makes recommendations for GLs, APDs and PD |